

Black action

NEWSLETTER FOR UNISON BLACK MEMBERS

WINTER 2020



Growing a Stronger Union

Black members stronger together in UNISON



UNISON BLACK MEMBERS
EQUALITY


UNISON
the public service union

Yvonne Green, UNISON London regional convenor, wins the 2019 Nelson Mandela Award



Congratulations to Yvonne Green who is the 2019 Nelson Mandela Award Winner. Yvonne is the Greater London regional convenor and branch secretary for the local government branch in Croydon. She told Black Action: "I am delighted to have been chosen by my peers as this year's winner and I am overwhelmed with pride to be honoured in this way"

Yvonne is the first Black person to be branch secretary in her branch and has been the Greater London Regional Convenor for several years. She has been a real pioneer - driving the equality agenda on behalf of UNISON members and taking those issues to her local council

leader and the leader of the Labour group of councillors. Her passion, commitment and hard work is really paying off. Croydon Council has now appointed its first female Black director, and also now has four women executive directors, three of whom are Black. Yvonne has also overseen the introduction of trade union officers sitting as panel members at interviews for senior director positions, which is unprecedented and a fantastic achievement.

Yvonne will be receiving her award at the National Black Members Conference this year and looking forward to meeting UNISON members at conference.

A moment of reflection Claire Andrews remembered by Hassan Orgtega

"They ran me out of Trinidad and Tobago, you know. In those days, it was a massive scandal having an open lesbian in our community...they threw bricks at me in the street."



With those words my colleague Claire Andrews summed up the circumstances that led to her arriving in the UK in the 1960's. Like

many of us who have experienced the trauma of ostracism and hatred, she glossed over those formative years in conversation but as she also said "You never forget, do you? You have to remember, you can't be a victim".

Claire had clear opinions about where we were going as a movement and what that meant for Black lesbians and gay men. She wanted to storm the barricades and

she did that – both figuratively and literally. Never one to be in awe of a title or perceived social position, she would march right up to her target and start asking "Hello, what are you doing about...?" and put them on the spot.

She gave a lot of her time and energy in UNISON to ensure that there was space in Black members and (then) lesbian and gay members self-organisation to debate our issues, and get policies in place which addressed them.

After retirement, she lived in sheltered accommodation. When I went to visit to check she had settled in, I found her making hot pepper sauce (which she always carried with her). So, how do you like it?" I asked. She replied: "It's full

of aspidistras and old people – it needs shaking up – they won't know what's hit them!"

Claire Andrews was a remarkable person who should not be forgotten for making Black LGBT+ history during her lifetime but she also made a lot of friends.

The WASPI campaign and UNISON Black Women members

By Abiola Kusoro, National Black Members Committee, NEC Black members seat representative

Women born on or after 6 April 1950 are facing hardship in retirement as a result of the government's changes to their state pension age. The 1995 Pension Act increased women's state pension age to 65, the same as men's. At the time many organisations – including the Turner Commission and Saga – recommended that the government should ensure that the women affected were given fair notice of the changes. These recommendations were ignored by the government and as a result hundreds of thousands of women have had no time to make alternative arrangements and their plans for retirement have been shattered.

The WASPI (Women against state pension inequality) campaign is fighting for justice for these women, and is a campaign UNISON is actively involved in.

I personally understand what a minefield the topic of pensions is and it can sometimes feel like it has been made intentionally difficult to understand how much you should be saving, when you can get your pension and how it will be paid to you.

Imagine then the situation faced by those women born in the 1950s who would have been a few years away from retirement, only to be told, with little or no notice, that they are now required to work for six more years before retiring and getting the money that is rightfully theirs.

The impact of these changes, and the shocking way this has been handled, is acutely felt among Black women - who are often paid less than their white counterparts and more likely to be working more than one job.

As part of the WASPI campaign UNISON has been involved in:

- lobbying the government for change
- educating members on pensions to ensure fairness and to help avoid hardship down the line
- supporting members to write to their MP and make complaints to the Department of Work and Pensions
- taking legal action against the government for the unfair implementation of the changes.

Despite the recent court case going against us, WASPI, UNISON National Black Members' and National Women's committees remain determined to right the wrongs committed a decade ago.

Key equality issues for Black members

Equality is at the heart of everything UNISON does, it's part of our DNA. Here are some of the key areas of work for us.

Challenging Race discrimination in workplaces – challenging racism in the workplace is vital to UNISON's work whether it involves growing membership, organising members around campaigns, representing members, challenging pay freezes, reorganisation and redundancies or bargaining and negotiating for members.

Community campaigns – for Black people in the UK inequality manifests itself most visibly in higher rates of unemployment and child poverty, poorer education outcomes and an over-representation in the criminal justice system compared to white communities. To tackle racism in the workplace it is imperative that we also have campaigns that look at discrimination in wider society.

Political engagement – the Conservative government claims to have equality at the heart of its values but they have not delivered on a cross-sectional race equality strategy. Instead they have mounted a sustained attack on workers' rights that have disproportionately impacted on Black workers. We want Black people to effectively engage in British politics and help influence policy plans that can tackle persistent race inequality.

Human rights and international – UNISON policy on international and human rights issues continues to be of importance to the NBMC. Civil and human rights have always been and continue to be entwined, with the impact of Windrush, the rise of far-right groups and the anti-Semitism debate. This has only reinforced our commitment to end discrimination in all its aspects. Black members have connections across the world and recognise that the events across the globe affect us all in terms of the economy, environment and workers' rights.

Black Health and well being – Black people living in the UK are more likely to suffer from particular health conditions than white people. Long-term health conditions have serious implications for Black workers, particularly those who have long periods of sickness absence from work. In these cases, there is an important role for the union to play in protecting vulnerable workers.

Many Black people work to deliver public services to vulnerable people and local communities. As a member of UNISON, the UK's largest public service union you can get more involved.

Fighting for equality is now more important than ever – sign up join online joinunison.org

UNISON launches the Race for Equality Campaign in the NHS

UNISON launched our Race for Equality Campaign in the NHS as part of Black history month last October.

UNISON will not stand by while Black staff in the NHS continue to face the injustice of racism and inequality at work.

More than 70 years after it was founded, the NHS continues to rely on staff from all around the world, and generations of Black staff have made the NHS what it is today. Yet many Black staff in the NHS still face the injustice of racism and inequality at work every day.

Through this campaign, UNISON wants to help staff recognise and challenge racism in the workplace. We aim to support staff – and help them support each other – as we work together to take on racism and deliver an NHS that respects and values all staff.

That's why we are making tackling racism a core organising and bargaining priority for health branches.

You can read more about the Race for Equality campaign, and access the resources to support your campaigning work at unison.org.uk/raceforequality

There are plenty of things our health branches can do to get involved and we've put some suggestions together as follows:

- Familiarise yourself with the campaign materials
- Use the Race for Equality leaflet (available from the campaign page as a download from the online catalogue stock number 4120) to start conversations with existing and potential members about racism in the workplace
- Encourage members to talk about their experiences and tell their story
- Talk to your region about training needs to get your stewards skilled and confident in recognising and tackling the issues
- Use the branch action plan – there are lots of practical suggestions and ideas on how to get involved in this campaign (available as a download from the campaign page)
- Use the briefings: there is one on disciplinary action, one on career progression and one on bullying and harassment. All are available as downloads from the campaign page and again all have lots of practical suggestions and ideas on how to tackle racism
- Keep checking the campaign page for updates; as this is a new campaign we will be adding resources as the campaign develops and grows
- Let the health team know about how you are able to deliver this campaign locally: what issues have you uncovered? What actions have you taken that are working? What are you struggling with? Is there anything more that you need to help tackle racism in your workplace?
- Email at health@unison.co.uk

Congratulations

UNISON congratulate former Deputy Chair of the National Black Members Committee, (pictured third from left) Kim Johnson MP, on being elected as the first Black female MP for Liverpool Riverside.

We congratulate her on her election result, gaining a larger majority for Labour in her constituency than 2017. Kim has been a UNISON member for years and has stood up for fairness and equality, fighting on behalf of UNISON members. Kim will speak at the Labour Link Forum at this year's National Black Members Conference. We look forward to seeing her in the Houses of Parliament, making her maiden speech and delivering on behalf of her constituency.



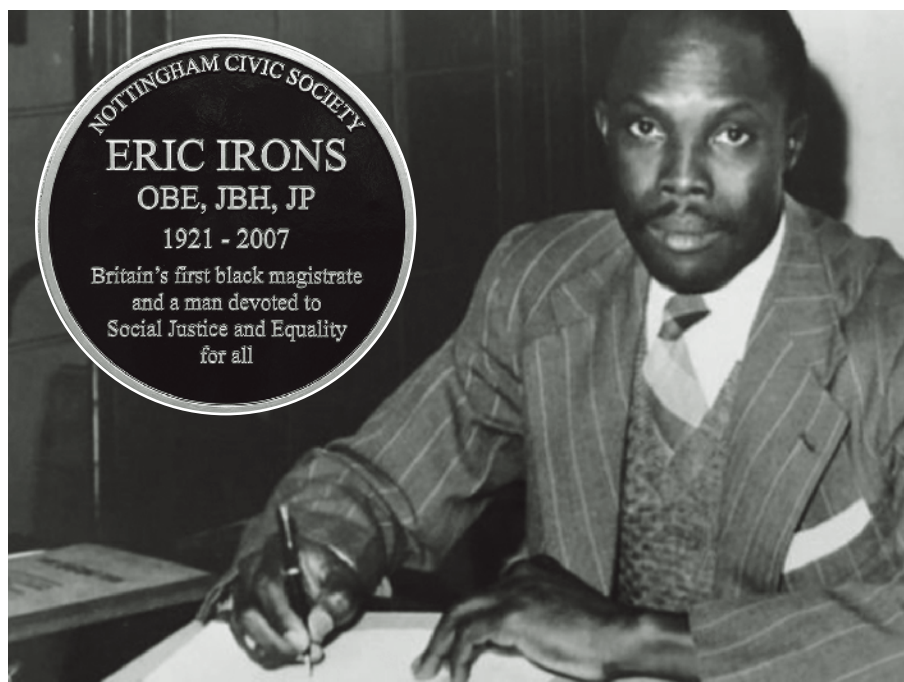
Commemorating Eric Irons: Britain's first Black magistrate

Eric Irons, Britain's first Black magistrate and campaigner for social justice, was commemorated with a plaque outside the National Justice Museum in Nottingham in October last year.

The plaque describes him as 'Britain's first Black magistrate and a man devoted to social justice and equality for all'.

Born in Jamaica in 1921, Eric Irons served in the RAF and first came to the UK from the Caribbean during the second world war. After extending his military service, Irons settled in Nottingham where he married local woman Nellie Kelham.

Racial equality and social justice were at the forefront of Iron's agenda throughout his career. Part of a minority of Black workers at the Chilwell Ordnance Depot from 1952, Irons took issue with racial discrimination against Black employees with the Nottingham and District Trade Council, and successfully secured further working opportunities for more Black employees at the depot.



Irons continued to make his mark on Nottingham and, in 1955, established a consultative committee for the welfare of Black people in his own home. His endeavours as a magistrate first began in 1962, where his position on the bench was the source of

significant scrutiny from the media. Despite this, his unrelenting efforts to advance social equality and justice were recognised when he was awarded an OBE for his service in 1978. Irons continued to serve on the bench in Nottingham for 29 years before retiring in 1991.

London UK Black Pride

by Natalie Forbes-Smalley, National Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Plus (NLGBT+) and Black LGBT+ Caucus representative

This year I was able to share the experience of representing UNISON in London Pride and UK Black pride with my 15-year old Son Nathaniel. Nathaniel has joined me on many rallies and parades but this was his first time marching in London Pride and attending UK Black pride. The atmosphere at both prides was amazing. Nathaniel beamed from ear to ear constantly for the two days. I was so proud to see my young man march with such pride holding our banner with his head held high.

UK Black pride is such an important event for me culturally as a Black lesbian woman. To be able to share this event with my son was emotional but awesome. Nathaniel thoroughly enjoyed it I could see he got the same gratification in his heart I get at this event. He



helped out on the UNISON stall and I was able to share some of the work I do on the national LGBT+ committee with him as I was one of the panel members on a debate session on the values of being in a trade union (although his presence made me more nervous than I have ever been before).

Nathaniel would like to thank UNISON for giving him the opportunity to attend, hand in hand with his mother, these two events that have such important and special meaning to us both.

The fight to widen Windrush is underway

By **Antonia Bright**, Black members' officer at SOAS UNISON (HE branch) and leading organiser in the Movement for Justice.

Contact: Antonia.bright@ueaa.net and [@antoniab4](https://twitter.com/antoniab4)

'Widen Windrush' is a campaign endorsed by UNISON's national delegate conference and we are working with Movement for Justice, to widen the government's "Windrush Scheme" to include the descendants who came post-1972. Trade unionists can play a crucial role in this campaign by helping to get the word out and organising around this issue. If UNISON Black Members take the lead, we can make a huge impact for Windrush Justice.

Many of us are connected to generations who came before the 1970's and 80's. How many left children behind? How many were raised by extended families? How many are treated as 'outsiders' while their parents and younger siblings are British?

This is where Widen Windrush comes in – to continue the fight started in the 60's and 70's by those campaigners who recognised the divide-and-rule racism contained in immigration laws. They fought to stop the introduction of laws that intentionally degraded the rights of Black British people born in the Commonwealth, and marched under the banner 'No Colour Bar on Immigration'.

Those racially divisive laws were passed and now underpin the injustice of the 'Windrush scandal'.

Black workers are powerful, and that is why we are attacked. When we speak the truth about racism, we move those around us and win over allies among all the oppressed and exploited. We must be unequivocal on all immigrant rights, and reject division based on visa status or country of origin.

Let us not leave anyone behind, whatever their generation; hailing



Janet Daby MP hosted the launch campaign in July 2019

from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia or any part of the Commonwealth and former colonies. You may be affected directly or indirectly by the Windrush Scheme. If we stop the government getting away with this injustice we will give people and communities so much hope and the confidence to fight other injustices.

Why and how to widen the Windrush Scheme?

While the government has been forced to accept the pre-1972 generation as British, they are still 'not British enough' to pass on any rights to the children they left behind the way a British person born in Britain can. So, Windrush descendants are still facing removal.

The Windrush Scheme can easily be extended to the descendants and close relatives of that generation. Winning this would save lives and end a lot of suffering.

At the parliamentary launch of Widen Windrush hosted by Janet Daby MP, powerful speakers, – most of them

Windrush descendants, including Yvonne Williams, recounted their fight having been detained in Yarl's Wood. MPs David Lammy and Eleanor Smith also spoke.

The plan is for a class action to challenge the 1968 and 1971 immigration laws. More examples of people affected are sought, and a much-needed crowd-funder is underway.

The Windrush Scandal exposed the racist hostile environment policy and is a tragic indictment of where decades of anti-immigrant laws and rhetoric have left us. It highlights the future risks if we allow the further erosion of our freedom of movement under Brexit. It exposed what had been generally hidden from view: arbitrary detention of immigrants including asylum seekers, individuals set up to fail under a heavy burden of proof, years of poverty while awaiting decisions, and the compounding of injustice by slashing legal aid, the right to work and access to healthcare.

It also showed the weakness of the policies that rely on arrogant racism to point of becoming overreaching.

The then home secretary, Amber Rudd, was forced to apologise and resign.

The fight for immigrant rights has to become an urgent priority for Black members. There has been too much division setting the settled against the newly arrived which has made us all less safe. We face Brexit and its built-in racism and xenophobia, since scapegoating immigration will continue to be the go-to excuse for economic crisis, and key driver of anti-working class attacks.

We must lead the whole union as we campaign on this issue. The NDC vote to support the Widen Windrush campaign shows that the whole union is behind us as we continue the fight for Windrush justice. Alongside our existing unequivocal defence of full free movement of people, our union is on the side of ending the racist and xenophobic hostile environment in real ways. Now the opportunity to turn this into action is right in front of us. Let's

fight to Widen Windrush and make free movement and immigrant rights a principle we put into action across all our branches.

Widen Windrush is on tour!

The Widen Windrush national tour is underway! Can your branch host a meeting for workers and the local community? Can you help get the word out and invite members to come and learn more? Let roll out Widen Windrush everywhere, encourage our people out from under the shadow of the racist hostile environment and organise to win real justice, dignity and our right to be here!

Just contact me (details at the start of the article)

if you can host a meeting or want to get more involved. Follow @BlackUNISON to keep updated on UNISON race equality campaigns and activities. For the campaign: @followMFJ #WidenWindrush #WorkersWindrush or contact@movementforjustice.co.uk



50 years of Stonewall – Black LGBT+ contribution: hidden voices

By Bev Miller, National Black Members Committee, LGBT+ representative

The Stonewall Riots, also called the Stonewall Uprising, began in the early hours of June 28, 1969 when New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in Greenwich Village in New York City. The raid sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighbourhood residents as police roughly hauled employees and patrons out of the bar, leading to six days of protests and violent clashes with law enforcement outside the bar on Christopher Street, in neighbouring streets and in nearby Christopher Park. The Stonewall Riots served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States and around the world.

Police raids on gay bars were common, but on that particular night, members of the city's LGBT community decided to fight back—sparking an uprising that would launch a new era of resistance and revolution.

The history of the Stonewall riots would not be complete without acknowledging the contribution of Black LGBT+ activists. 50 years after the riots it seems pertinent to raise awareness of the role that Black LGBT+ activists played in this important historical event.



Stormé DeLarverie was a butch lesbian born in New Orleans, to an African American mother and a white father and she was

responsible for starting the first Stonewall riot at 1.20am on June 28 1969. Stormé DeLarverie was hit on the head with a billy club and handcuffed. She was bleeding from the head when she brazenly turned to the crowd and hollered, “WHY

DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING!?”

After a long struggle, Stormé was dragged into a paddy wagon and that's when the scene exploded. That summer night a revolution began and it was a strong butch woman of colour that is reported to have thrown the first punch. Exactly one year later, on June 28, 1970, the first Pride parade took place.



When Rivera threw that second Molotov cocktail at Stonewall, she was only 17. But Stonewall incited fervour in Rivera to keep going,

to keep fighting for voices marginalised within the gay rights space. She became involved with the Gay Liberation Front, or GLF, and the Gay Activists' Alliance, GAA, and challenged the way the predominantly white gay and lesbian community approached activism from a middle-class perspective.

Rivera wanted their activism to be more progressive, to include in their fight the rights of transgender individuals, including people of colour, the homeless, and the incarcerated. But she challenged multiple communities through her activism, also working with Puerto Rican activist organization the Young Lords, hoping the Puerto Rican and Latina communities would acknowledge the reality of gay and transgender people.

Defiant of labels, Rivera confounded many in the mainstream gay liberation movement because of her own diverse and complex background: She was poor, trans, a drag queen, a person of colour, a former sex worker, and someone who also experienced

drug addiction, incarceration and homelessness. For all of these reasons, Rivera fought for not only gay and trans rights but also racial, economic and criminal justice issues.



Marsha P. Johnson was an American gay liberation activist and self-identified drag queen. Known as an outspoken advocate for gay rights, Johnson

was one of the prominent figures in the Stonewall uprising of 1969.

Johnson, alongside her good friend Sylvia Rivera, emerged from the clashes as leaders in the nascent gay liberation movement. They helped found the group Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), which offered housing to homeless and transgender youth.

She is remembered as one of the most significant activists for transgender rights, although the term “transgender” wasn't commonly used during her lifetime. Johnson identified as a “transvestite,” gay and a drag queen, and used she/her pronouns.

In remembering Stonewall it is important to recognise that Black LGBT+ people, galvanised a revolution that fought in solidarity for people regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or class. Stormé, Sylvia and Marsha's contributions to this historic event, needs to be highlighted and celebrated as we salute their bravery and activism in a politically hostile environment that could not prevent them from taking action.

UNISON supporting the campaign to for a slavery memorial in Hyde Park

For the past 12 years, Memorial 2007, a registered charity with no paid staff and run entirely by volunteers has been campaigning and raising money to erect a permanent memorial to remember enslaved Africans and their descendants.

This group of volunteers have been at UNISON Black History and Black community events since 2017 making the case, persuading and appealing for donations. Their campaign is a serious and determined project with an impressive list of patrons and trustees that includes our very own General Secretary, Dave Prentis.

The proposed memorial has been designed by Australian sculptor Les Johnson and, in 2006, the Royal Parks offered a site in the rose gardens of Hyde Park for an Enslaved Africans Memorial Garden. Slowly, donation by donation, they have been raising funds and creeping towards the required figure of £3.3m to cover the cost.

UNISON donated £7,000 to the campaign in 2017 and Dave Prentis, who became a patron of the campaign in the same year, said: “This memorial is a vital opportunity to remember the brutal impact of transatlantic slavery on enslaved Africans and generation of descendants, one of humanity’s greatest crimes. I’m proud to support it both personally and on behalf of UNISON’s 1.3 million members”.

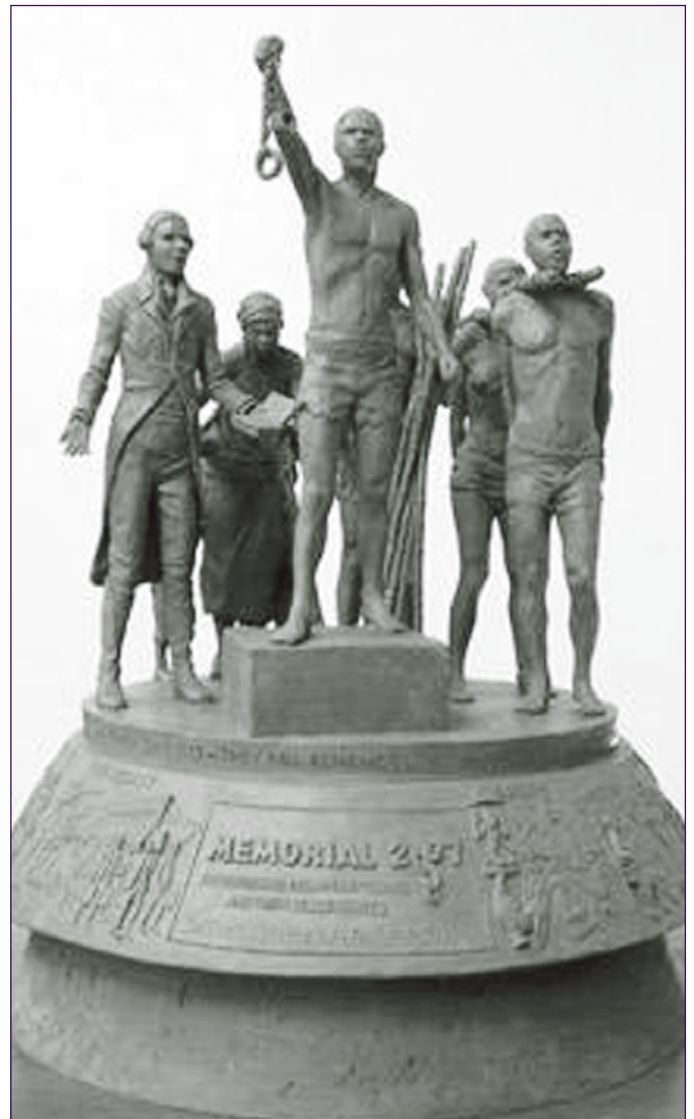
In February 2015, Memorial 2007 approached the government to request financial assistance. It was partly inspired by the news that, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, pledged £50m towards the cost of a new Holocaust memorial and education centre.

Memorial 2007 had a polite meeting at Number 10 Downing Street, but were given no commitments, no money and no reply to their requests to date.

Another patron Lord Oates, has raised the subject twice in the House of Lords in 2016 and 2017. The memorial campaigners have said “we are trying to get government support but the memorial is an uncomfortable truth for many, consequently there have been many obstacles to overcome to bring this to fruition”.

Like the demands for reparations being made by the nations of the Caribbean, whatever the merits of their case, demands for a slavery memorial in the UK are unlikely to go away.

The Royal Parks have been incredibly patient and supportive but after 12 years, it is disappointing that not enough funds have been raised and successive governments and Prime Ministers have not paid much attention to the need to memorialise this “painful legacy” left by slavery.



Alli Mussa Iye of UNESCO said “This memorial is considered as an important contribution for raising public awareness on the history of the slave trade and slavery”.

The National Black Members Committee is now calling on all branches and regions to affiliate to “Memorial 2007” and UNESCO and to support their campaign to help to raise the required funding for “an Enslaved Africans Memorial Garden”.

For further details go to memorial2007.org.uk and follow the campaign on Twitter @memorial2007.org.uk

Black mental health

by Jed Murray, Deputy Chair NBMC

People from African Diaspora, including those of white and Black mixed heritage, can face additional problems that may affect their mental health. Black communities in the UK are still more likely than others to experience problems such as bad housing, unemployment, stress and racism, all of which can make people ill. Worldwide, it seems that people who move from one country to another have a higher risk of mental illness.

Five steps to mental wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are five steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing. If you approach them with an open mind and try them out, you can judge the results yourself.

Connect – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. Spend time developing these relationships.

Be active – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find the activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

Keep learning – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike.

Give to others – even the smallest act can count whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.

Be mindful – be more aware of the present moment, including your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness", and it can positively

change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

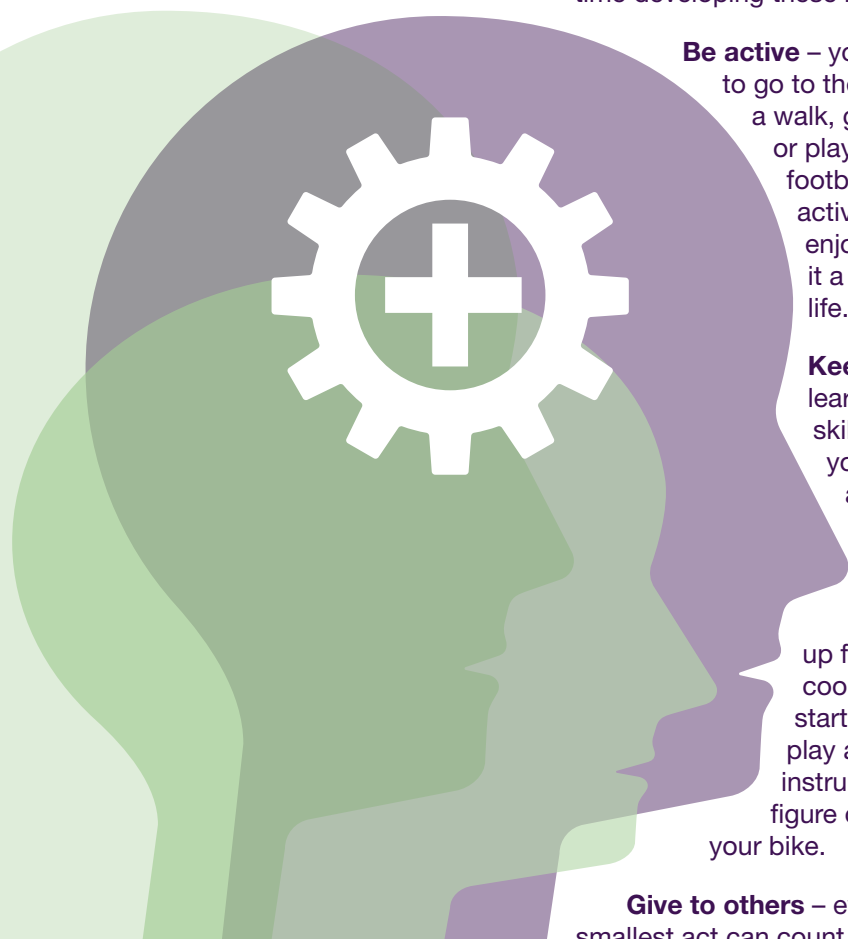
According to the Mental Health Foundation, Black people are also more likely to enter mental health services via the courts or the police, rather than from primary care, which is the main route to treatment for most people. They are also more likely to be treated under a section of the Mental Health Act, are more likely to receive medication, rather than be offered talking treatments such as psychotherapy, and are over-represented in high and medium secure units and prisons.

This may be because they are reluctant to engage with services, and so are much more ill when they do. It may also be that services use more coercive approaches to treatment.

Police detention rates under the Mental Health Act continue to be highest for people from the UK's Black communities, even though there isn't a high prevalence of mental illness among this group. Black people are currently 50% more likely to be referred to mental health services via the police than their white counterparts.

The high profile, deaths in police custody, cases of Kingsley Burrell-Brown, Sean Rigg, Olaseni Lewis, Colin Holt, Mikey Powell and Roger Sylvester is further evidence that failures in the policing of mental health services users are impacting people from Britain's Black communities in greatest numbers. Ref: Black Mental health UK

There is currently no action plan specifically for Black and ethnic communities. The last Labour government's action plan on Black mental health 'Delivering Race Equality' (DRE) ended in 2010 and has not been renewed or replaced and the remnants of this initiative have all but disappeared. DRE was based on the recommendations



This is especially true for Black people who move to predominantly white countries. The risk is even higher for unaccompanied children, in particular those who are seeking asylum or have refugee status. While mental illness is no more common in Africa the Middle East or the Caribbean than it is in the UK as a whole, it is a bigger problem for Black communities living in the UK.

from the David ‘Rocky’ Bennett Inquiry in 2004, with a clear remit for commissioners and service providers to tackle ethnic inequality. DRE also led to the introduction of community development workers (CDWs) and the ‘Count Me In’ survey, the only UK census that includes all in-patients in mental health services, and has a breakdown by ethnicity.

Patrick Vernon (former chief executive of the Afiya Trust) stated, before he left the trust, “There are renewed calls for The Department of Health to develop a new national strategy to tackle race inequality in mental health services, including on workforce development and leadership, and improve outcomes for Black communities. This should build on lessons learned from Delivering Race Equality Strategy.”

The Afiya Trust and other race equality organisations such as Race on the Agenda, along with service user-led organisations including the National Survivor User Network, are considering developing an alternative call to action on race equality in mental health.

This initiative seeks to explore how the Department of Health, GP consortia and service providers can be more accountable in developing strategies on race equality, in line with legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, which appears to have slipped many minds. Not ours.

In addition calls for the reintroduction of RECAP training – The Race Equality and Cultural Awareness Programme cultural competency training to be mandatory, it is well established that in order to provide culturally competent care, knowledge of cultural beliefs, values and practices is necessary otherwise health practitioners can easily fall prey to errors of diagnosis, inappropriate management and poor compliance.

Mobilising and organising against the rise of the far right

by Adejare (‘Jare’) Oyewole –
NBMC communications officer

Racism is on the rise, encouraged and reinforced by mainstream politicians and the media as they divert blame for austerity and spiralling inequality away from those at the “top” of society.

Members of the UNISON National Members’ Committee do not believe that we should let the rise of the far right go unchallenged, that’s why we continue the campaign to challenge Racism in the Workplace and broader community

Across Europe, far right groups are gaining support - from the extreme-right Golden Dawn party in Greece to the anti-semitic and Islamophobic government in Hungary. In the US, Donald Trump’s racism encouraged fascists to attack the rights of Black, LGBTQ+ people and women.

In July members of the US House of representatives voted by 240 to 187 in favour of denouncing Mr Trump for making racist comments that have legitimised fear and hatred on “new America and people of colour”.

The expectations of the US are greater than expectations of other countries. Mr Trump has normalised language and behaviour that previously was on the fringes so it’s no surprise that when you speak to people in Italy, Greece, Hungary, and even here in the UK, the far-right movement seems to see Mr Trump as their champion.

Racism is systemic and it is not about hating one person but a whole race or religion. Recently, Michael Szeewczuk, a far-right teenager, branded Prince Harry “a traitor” for marrying Meghan Markle, who has a Black mother.

We have all been shocked by the millions mobilised by the extreme-right across the world. The rights of women, Black people, and LGBTQ+ communities are under threat as far-right politicians make advances across Europe and the US.

In previous years, the frustration came from the lack of progress. Now, for the first time, there is a danger that the progress that has been made in the fight for equality could be rolled back.

The trade union movement needs to mobilise against the far-right groups wherever they seek to gain ground. We have a proud history of defeating fascists and now we must stand in solidarity with groups fighting racism, united in the face of our enemies. Our union has so much to be proud of, campaigning for human rights across the globe – we mustn’t stop now, we must re-double our effort in fighting back against racism. There is a fierce urgency now.

What the racist and fascist did in the 1970s about Black and Asian people and Jewish people in the 1930s is what they are doing to Muslims now. The racism that bubbles under the surface seems more legitimate now.

The far right has no real solutions to today’s problems, instead they thrive on division and hate. It is time to be clear that we are saying ‘No to Racism – Yes to Equality’. We must challenge racism every time it rears its ugly head. If we stand together, we can do it. We know that racism is not going to go away in 12 months but we must mobilise against a system that is propping up and normalising racism.

An attack on one is an attack on all. We have each other – let’s organise around that solidarity

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National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Committee

Bev Miller, Jennie Antonio

National Women's Committee

Carol Sewell, Magda Lezama

Black NEC members

Abiola Kusoro, Manjula Kumari,
Hugo Pierre, April Ashley



Black members are tweeting

Please follow
@BlackUNISON to keep
updated on UNISON race
equality campaigns
and activities.

Black **action** wants to hear from you

Black Action is UNISON's publication for Black members and activists. It provides information and guidance on the most relevant UNISON campaigns and issues affecting Black members and communities

We want to hear from you about your thoughts on the newsletter, our articles and campaigns.

It would also be great to hear what is happening in your branches and regions, what you are campaigning on and what recruitment activity you are doing.

We'd also like to hear about your experiences in the workplace and as a UNISON members, how you set up your Black members self-organised group.

You can email us at
blackmembers@unison.co.uk



Black members facebook page

Check out our
Facebook page:
BlackUNISON